

Blindside Script by Lorraine Seleven Lin

Webcomic Title Page: <http://lyritwolf.deviantart.com/art/Blindside-Title-299765034>

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Author's Note

Dear Reader,

This script picks up from Page 41 (<http://lyritwolf.deviantart.com/art/Blindside-Page-41-449500139>) of the "Blindside" comic. The webcomic, originally intended to be a ten page summary of how Nyxis lost her eye, has evolved into her life story. In my efforts to bring her to life, I've woven true emotions and experiences of my own into the story (and I leave it to you to draw the parallels.) I'd like to pretend that this ingredient makes "Blindside" a flavor that is not purely fiction. It has become a literary piece near and dear to my heart, my magnum opus at this point in time.

So you may be asking, why am I releasing the entire plot script to the public now? The main storyline has been in the works for nine years, and I have decided that it would be too large of an undertaking for me to continue in webcomic form by myself at this point in time and still give it the justice it deserves. However, it would also be unfair to me and to you keep "Blindside" in my head just because I don't have the energy to craft it as a webcomic, so here is the script for all to enjoy. I do plan to draw large plot points at least, and all the future renderings of the story will be true to this script. This script also includes additional notes from **Kate Akers**, the creator of Princess Eflasia and my partner in world-building.

If you are reading this, I want to take the time to say thank you for all of the support for my writing and characters. I hope to continue to entertain for many, many years. For now, please enjoy my ramblings of an ambitious Cabbit Princess and her faithful Bat Knight.

Cheers,
Lorraine Lin
Lorraine Lin

*Since the people of Eflasias and Nyxis's universe are talking animals that stand on two legs, the terms 'people' and 'furries' are used interchangeably.

Childhood Arc (Nyxis's Age: 10 years old)

Scene 1: Autumn, at the Duel

The judges decide that Nyxis and Benedict both pass—Barely. The teachers give them both advice: Benedict needs to be better prepared for the unexpected, and Nyxis needs to tell the teachers about any concerns she has in the future so they can accommodate her training better since she is the only squire in the class with wings (Nyxis also didn't tell Mr. Barthos that she is left-handed because she felt ostracized enough by the rest of the class. She started fighting considerably better during the duel when she swapped to her dominant hand.) Mr. Barthos also applauds Nyxis on her creativity and perception (using the sun as a cover), but tells her for now to stick to the conventional techniques he is teaching; the opportunity to take advantage of the environment will not always present itself, so it is important to know how to stand ground with the basics.

Eflasias arrives not soon after Nyxis and Benedict's duel is finished. Nyxis didn't tell Eflasias about the duel because she was unconfident about how well she would do. An angry Eflasias makes Nyxis promise never to keep secrets like that from her again.

Eflasias: Unacceptable! Inexcusable! In-e-xpia-ble! [Her nose scrunches and she says this word slowly, as she recently learned it and is using it for the first time] You better train extra hard and win the next one blindfolded and with both hands tied behind your back for me! I'm not going to put a weak, sniveling loser in charge of my army.

With the duel (and pep talk) wrapped up, Eflasias proceeds to drag Nyxis away so they can enjoy the afternoon.

Scene 2: Spring, during Magic Classes

Nyxis learns that she has an affinity for lightning magic. Ms. Willow, the phoenix-chicken magic teacher, warns that it is one of the most difficult magics to control, and could prove fatal if Nyxis is not careful with it. Nyxis thinks hard about it, and in the end decides that she will take up lightning instead of being a non-elemental knight since it would help her protect Eflasias. Nyxis tells Ms. Willow she will work hard to master lightning, and

that she plans to be a hero everybody looks up to because she will not kill people.

Training Arc (Nyxis's Age: 11-14 years old)

Scene 1: In Class

[A teenage Nyxis gives a speech in front of class. A banner in front of class reads, "Public Speaking."]

Nyxis: ...In conclusion, I think the world would be a better place if we get rid of bullying

[The teacher nods]

Nyxis: and eliminate the poor.

Teacher and Class:

[Nyxis looks extremely pleased, thinking that she has done a good job on her speech.]

Scene 2: At Sensei Claws' Dojo, One Year Later

Nyxis's parents insist that she take some sort of self-defense, so they begin taking her to a dojo in Bellefontaine, her hometown and Capitol of Fontis. Nyxis at first grudgingly goes, insisting that she doesn't need extra training. The academy gives her enough combat practice, and she feels like she would be ostracized more if her classmates found out she needed more help than the rest of them to fight.

The owner of the dojo is Sensei Claws the Tiger-Lion, who was once an adventurer. Now married to Yumi the Black Cat, he spends his retirement teaching his passion of martial arts. Although they have no children of their own, they own fifty or so pet cats Nyxis is rather fond of.

Although Nyxis never fully takes to the eastern fighting style, she learns three important things from Sensei Claws.

First, she learns Aikido, which uses locks, holds, throws, and the opponent's own momentum to pin them (Thus, she can bring down enemies larger than herself.) Aikido is also nicknamed 'the peaceful martial art.' Its goal is to defend oneself without harming the attacker, and upon the realization that the philosophy largely matches her own, Nyxis dedicates herself more to learning it.

Secondly, Nyxis learns that there are fighting techniques outside of the European-style blade she has been honing, including moves from the

east specialized for birds using blades. Sensei Claws teaches her what he knows of these. Nyxis later experiments with her academy training and dojo training to create her own stances and techniques; her elegant hybrid style looks more like dancing than fighting. Nyxis also learns that whether unorthodox techniques will be practical or not in a fight is something she will have to judge for herself.

Nyxis: Sensei, is there such a thing as a left-handed samurai?

Sensei Claws: Yes. They are all missing their sword arms.

Finally, Sensei Claws imbues upon Nyxis the philosophy of “The Art of War,” a treatise by the famous long-deceased General Sun Tzu the Dragon. Nyxis learns that the largest victory is being able to avert a fight in the first place; if conflict should start, the most successful war is one with the least number of casualties for both oneself and one’s enemy.

Scene 3: At Sensei Claws’ Dojo, Two Years Later

Nyxis: Sensei, I have a question.

Sensei Claws: Speak up.

Nyxis: I have learned about how to defend myself from enemies, but that does not change their minds. [Nyxis takes a moment to think about the troublesome, unreasonable squires in her class.] How do you deal with the people who don’t agree with you? I mean, people who look down on you?

Sensei Claws: Lead by example. Always lead by example. You may not know it, but friends and especially enemies pay attention to what you do. When they see you shine, they may change their minds. And if they don’t, oh well.

[Nyxis laughs.]

Sensei Claws: I’m excited to see that you will be embarking on your first adventure soon. I hope to see you return safely.

[Nyxis grows silent. Sensei Claws did not directly tell her, but she learned from mutual friends that he was supposed to die from lung cancer six years ago. He has looked to be in good health, invincible almost, the two years she has studied with him...]

Nyxis: I’ll be back to visit you. I promise!

Scene 4: Training Montage (Takes place throughout Nyxis's young teens)

Nyxis gets bored with archery (she is just an average shot with her talons) and whispers into a nearby student's ear. A teacher hears laughter and comes by to check on them. At the suggestion of Nyxis, the other student has created a smiley face on the target stand with her arrows.

Young Nyxis is sprawled on ground from a failed push-up with Eflasias sitting on her; Nyxis sighs, "This isn't working." Two years later, we see Nyxis performing a one-handed push up with Eflasias sitting on her and reading a book.

A friendly spar. The other student laughs at Nyxis as she prepares an Aikido move, "What is that technique? Hahahahaha, that's the stupidest stance I ever-" She cuts him off by slamming him to the ground and winning the round.

Jousting tournament: Nyxis on a noble steed high-fives Eflasias in the stands and humorously picks up a handkerchief from the princess. Another knight is sprawled on the ground, unconscious from a blow Nyxis dealt moments ago.

Scene 5: Reasons for Leaving

Nyxis decides it's time for her to leave Kade Castle and travel the world for training when she is fourteen. She finally realizes then that she cannot defeat Lieutenant General Gaius the Clydesdale, the current head general of the castle who is substantially (twenty years) older than her and good friends with Eflasias's father, King Kade. In fact, Gaius has almost flawlessly beaten Nyxis every time... Nyxis feels like not being able to win against the strongest warrior in Fontis means she is not worthy of protecting Eflasias yet.

Nyxis has challenged Gaius to battles three times in the past (rumors later declaring that those are the only three battles she has ever lost). She is also bewildered by her feelings, having developed a crush on him for his talent and skill (She tells Eflasias that she would have no feelings for him if she could fall him just once.)

Scene 6: Goodbye is Not Forever

After Nyxis says her farewells to her family, King Kade and Eflasia escort her to the edge of Fontis.

[A hug between the two girls.]

Eflasia: You're going to become the strongest knight in the world. Then, you're going to come back and kick Gaius's derrière. Then, I'm going to become queen and appoint you head general. Promise? You better promise!

Nyxis: [Laughs, trying not to cry] Okay, okay! Yes, I know! I promise.

Flashback to Present (She is 17 years old)

Scene 1: Beginning Summary

Having spent one or two months back at home now, Nyxis has had a lot of time to herself to think. In the three years she has been gone, her pet falcon Jewel has died, and Sensei Claws has passed away. She feels guilty that she rarely thought about Sensei while she was traveling.

Scene 2: The Illness

Nyxis finally gathers the courage to tell Eflasia about the crystal growth, and how the princess should stop considering her as future head general because Nyxis will die young from it. Nyxis is in tears, but Eflasia waves it off as Nyxis over-worrying, saying that the doctors of Fontis are the best in the world, and they will find a cure for it. Nyxis dries her tears; if Eflasia is this unconcerned with it, perhaps she is right.

Scene 3: Ending Summary

Town Rumor: Can you believe she's only been away training for three years?

She had shown great potential in her fighting, told them she had to leave if she were to make anything of her dreams to be the best.

She left home at age fourteen, promising her childhood friend, Princess Eflasia the Cabbit, that one day she'd be back, strong enough to be a knight for Eflasia and her father.

A promise was a promise.

Nyxis finally returned three years after she departed, with the skills she desired. Not soon after her return to Fontis, she worked quickly up the ranks to become the youngest general the kingdom ever had.

Love Arc (She is 17 years old)

At this point in time, Nyxis has the rank of Sergeant. A young dove comes into her office requesting some papers. Nyxis halfway through giving him the papers realizes they are ones that she has written cheesy poetry on. Embarrassed, she quickly switches the papers—but, he sees, and mentions that he likes to write poetry too. He shows her a couple pieces that he takes out of his pocket, and they start talking.

Friendship blossoms into romance. Lance Corporal Engleberg isn't great at leading, or much else. But Nyxis likes him because he is romantic—he writes poetry, will go on crazy adventures with her, and will sing and dance with her (and baffle everybody that is around them in the castle or in town when these impromptu musical shorts happen...) Plus, he is a bird so they can fly together. =)

Solider 1: (Judging tone) He's greatly below her fighting caliber. I don't see what she sees in him.

Soldier 2: But look, I've never seen her so happy before.

Engelberg's species is a bleeding-heart dove, and the first time they go to the beach, Nyxis freaks out because she sees the alarming red plumage on his chest (that the species is named for) and thinks he's actually wounded. He laughs and gives her a feather for her hair.

Gag Scene: Nyxis likes collecting novelty weapons and items. Engelberg walks into her office to see her unpacking a new set of handcuffs and feetcuffs, golden. He asks to try them out and another soldier walks in to see Nyxis standing in front of a bound Engelberg. The other soldier freaks out and runs away. Nyxis now 'threatens and interrogates' Engelberg (much innuendo persists), and ends up tickling him.

Gag Scene: Nyxis and Engleberg are eating in the dining hall. Nyxis offers Engelberg a turkey drumstick she is munching on and Engelberg nervously turns it down.

Character Scene: Engleberg proposes to Nyxis on a cliff at the beach they visit often, but she turns it down. She tells him that she feels like they are

too young to be engaged, and that he shouldn't get too attached to her. Finally, she adds that she won't live to an age where she would accept an engagement because of the crystal growth. (Now, he is the second person besides Eflasia that she has confessed to about the crystal growth.)

Nyxis: [Trying to lighten the mood] "You know, Birdy, this means that we can't have kids—Not that I want kids anyways. I hope you're okay with that."

Engelberg is hurt and surprised (obviously) and leaves, but a couple days later, he comes back and says he's decided to stay with her for the remainder of her life.

Love Arc Finale:

All of the knights under Nyxis and Engelberg make an unstoppable team. The previous missions they have completed (including confrontations with sky pirates, thieves, someone who stepped on Eflasia's foot...) went without a hitch, so she and everyone else believes her to be talented at the job. They all trust in her leadership and do exactly what she says. (She is still relatively inexperienced though.)

At the current battle, Nyxis issues some rather brazen orders. Something in the plan goes wrong along the way, and Engelberg dies abruptly from enemy weapons. The plan can carry on otherwise perfectly without him, and Nyxis could still win by coaxing the enemy into a surrender if she keeps going with it.

However, Nyxis snaps from seeing his lifeless body. She issues all the enemy soldiers killed on the spot, save for a single doe warrior to return as a messenger and relay that "nobody fucks with Fontis."

Nyxis takes complete responsibility for Engelberg's death because he died while following her orders. She had been extremely lucky in her fights until now, but had mistaken that luck for her own believed invincible judgment. She had never considered that negative outcomes were very possible in a place as unpredictable as the battlefield. Engleberg's death was the first one Nyxis ever saw, and it ended up causing the other deaths on the enemy's side because of her rash decisions.

This is the first fight where she sees death and the turning point where she realizes,

Nyxis: "I thought I could be a hero, and then no one would die. I'm so stupid."

Although she knows he cannot hear her, she says her goodbyes, kissing him, sobbing and holding his limp body, her soldiers all around her seeing her cry for the first (and she swears, last) time.

From this point on that she decides that romantic love is not for her.

Love is an emotion that clouds judgment, too dangerous for her line of work.

She decides to dedicate the rest of her life to ensuring Eflasia's survival and well-being (even more).

The Prosperous Arc (Nyxis is 18 years old at the start of this arc)

Scene 1: Starting Summary

Fontis enjoys several prosperous years. In general, the citizens avoid Nyxis and Eflasia when they are seen together because they are bad gossips and enjoy pranking. (Maybe I'll toss a parody musical scene in here. Pranks regarding suitors for Eflasia would be great. Perhaps she eyes a female suitor more interestedly than the males before turning them all down.)

Kate's Note: I'm picturing random people running out of the way to avoid their popular girl taunts.

Author's Note: Nyxis calls Eflasia a cunny because she is a cat bunny. Nyxis is a batch. These are furry swear words we made up. I need to use them (badly) at least once in the story.

Scene 2: About Eflasia's Mother:

Nyxis realizes that other than word from the castle and kingdom residents, she doesn't know very much about Eflasia's mother, who was a concubine and left the kingdom shortly after she gave birth to Eflasia. Eflasia's mother was of middle-eastern (Egyptian by nonfictional comparison) descent and also a pink cabbit, the reason why Eflasia is the only royal cabbit who is not albino.

Nyxis asks Eflasia about if she misses her mother. Eflasia says not really; she never met her mother and had many nannies to act as mother figures. Plus, Eflasia wants nothing to do with her mother because she was not nobility, and she was "a coward who fled the kingdom."

Nyxis finishes the conversation and leaves, still a little worried for Eflasia because of the cabbit's unusual family dynamics and nonchalant attitude towards it.

Scene 3: Childhood Friend:

Jaspar is the wolf that Nyxis, Thorn, and Eflasia used to hang out with. Coming from a lower-middle-class (the lowest social class in Fontis) family,

Jaspar and Nyxis went their separate ways, as Nyxis became a knight and Jaspar a thief. They still keep in touch though, and he is one of Nyxis's few close friends that knows about the crystal growth. Nyxis and Eflasia agreed it would be best not to tell King Kade or anyone in the military about Nyxis's illness because it might harm her chances of getting promotions in the military. Secrecy for ambition.

Jaspar finds Nyxis moping on a rooftop in the city and brings her some ice cream.

Nyxis: ...You stole these, didn't you? Do I need to arrest you? For *ice cream*?

Jaspar: Hey, hey, remember! Kings are just successful thieves, so give me a few years and you might be working for [jabs a thumb to his chest] *me*, hah.

[Nyxis raises an eyebrow]

Jaspar: ...they're from that ice cream man who always shot you and Thorn dirty looks anyways.

[Nyxis smiles and grabs it.]

Jaspar: So, I don't get it. If all this hero stuff is stressing you out, why don't you just drop it? Change your [he finger quotes the word] "destiny" so all that bad shit doesn't end up happening.

Nyxis: This is what I've wanted to do since I was a kid, Jaspar. I can't explain it. I'm not going to let a stupid prophecy stop me from going for my dreams. ...and you do know I love Eflasia.

[Jaspar's face contorts in utter horror and shock]

[Nyxis elbows him so hard he nearly falls off the roof and almost drops his ice cream]

Nyxis: No you twit, not like that.

Scene 4: Dragon Troubles Filler

A new dragon has been terrorizing the nearby pastures. At first the townspeople think he's eating livestock, but upon closer inspection they find that he has meticulously buried half of each creature into the ground.

Townsperson: He's not burning down any villages, he just lands, rolls on buildings, drools on people and flies away.

Townsperson 2: And he's got these itty-bitty wings. He doesn't fly very well at all.

The dragon also releases terrible farts that set barns on fire. Nyxis goes to inspect the bizarre occurrence and finds that the dragon is actually her newest knight, Sir Samson the Labrador Border-Collie, who snuck away one of the experimental transmogrification potions because it looked tasty. Samson is a happy, simple-minded, easily distracted dog, so of course it was him. Nyxis and the other knights retrieve him soon enough.

Scene 5: Samson with Long Hair Filler

Samson decides that he is going to grow his hair out. Upon it reaching a fabulous length, he suddenly has a godly presence and seemingly infinite wisdom. Everybody wants to associate with him, and even Nyxis is unexplainably attracted to him until she discerns, "...Samson, is that you?" Samson waves off all the offers to spend time with him saying, "But I REALLY need to go get a haircut. It's very important." Once he leaves the barber's, he's back to his silly, doofus self.

Scene 6: Rematch with Gaius

Nyxis, four years after her last loss, re-challenges General Gaius to a duel. Both fighting with broadswords, it is a close contest. She manages to match his moves and finally knocks his sword from his hand.

Gaius: Good job, Sir Pierce. The sword isn't my primary weapon though.

Nyxis: It...it isn't?

[Gaius, himself a large person, takes a proportionally massive lance from the weapon rack]

Gaius: Would you like another match?

Nyxis: [Stifles nervous laughter] No, no... I'm fine.

Scene 7: Sir Tailchaser

Samson Tailchaser has not particularly shown any outstanding qualities in his work, other than the dogged loyalty that usually comes with

canines. Nyxis asks Samson about how in the world he got knighted. He shrugs.

We get a flashback to Samson's past. He used to work as a shepherd and fisherman—his father's and mother's respective jobs. He got curious about some people lining up for a castle event and joined them. It turns out they were going to the yearly knighting, and Samson accidentally got knighted since the name 'S. Tailchaser' was on the list ('Tailchaser' is not an uncommon last name for dogs.) The original S. Tailchaser was so ashamed that he was late, he did not show up at all.

Nyxis eventually pieces together that Samson accidentally fell into the system. When this is brought to Kade's attention, the king finds it amusing and says they can't get rid of Samson because the dog did not technically do anything wrong.

Scene 8: Age of the Humans

Eflasias is reading in the castle library. This is one of her favorite pastimes. The library is full of neat things, like stairs shaped like closed books and an enormous globe as tall as the first floor. There is a miniature museum inside the library with a funny looking skeleton that has no muzzle or tail. Eflasias comments on how "fugly" the skeleton is. Nyxis and Eflasias reflect upon the story of the age of the humans: Humans lived on Earth millions of years ago and wiped themselves out (probably in a nuclear war.) Their remaining magic (chemicals that leaked into the water) gave rise to the walking, talking animals of today. A bookkeeper comes by and panics because one of the artifacts is gone. In another room, Samson is admiring his new sunglasses and excitedly exclaims, "Hey, these are mine!"

Some backstory: Eflasias and Nyxis's world map is halfway between Earth 2014's continent formation and Pangaea Ultima's continent formation:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pangaea_Ultima

Thus, the continents that have water separating them have not joined yet. Fontis is located on Earth 2014's United Kingdom, which is (at Nyxis and Eflasias's time) a peninsula during most of the year, and an island during the

rainy autumns. There are tall bridges leading from mainland Europe to Fontis for when the land bridges submerge.

Scene 9: Lieutenant General Nyxis Joanne Pierce

Through Nyxis's dedication but probably moreso through Eflasia's insistence, Nyxis is bestowed the rank of Lieutenant General. Gaius believes Nyxis is too young and inexperienced for the position. However, Eflasia gets away with finalizing it since 1. the rank is more honorary than anything else during this time of flourishing peace expected to last indefinitely, 2. her father doesn't seem to have any qualms about it, and 3. she's the princess who always gets what she wants.

Nyxis immediately goes forth and starts putting some unorthodox training into place, such as requiring all soldiers to learn ballroom dancing and have mandatory days off.

Scene 10: Art

Nyxis heads to town square. A sculptor has asked her to attend for the unveiling of a gift. He says he knows she likes fountains, so he made her one himself. He pulls the tarp off of it. It is a statue of Nyxis. She is atop a rearing warhorse that seems to be crushing enemy soldiers underneath who are trying to crawl away. In politeness (and feigned joy), Nyxis says she appreciates the gift. The sculptor looks ecstatic, saying it took him forever to make it and that he believes he has truly caught her personality with the piece.

Scene 11: Eflasia the Fountain

There are reports of a crazed murderer wandering near Fontis as well as strange sicknesses going around. The kingdom is on lockdown. Mysteriously, although those falling ill are alarmingly close, nobody in Fontis itself has been affected.

One sunny day, Nyxis hears that Eflasia's in trouble and rushes to the mage's tower to save her. A strange, dark bat with tattered wings who calls himself Mylo is trying to possess Eflasia, spouting nonsense like "unimaginable powers" and "the Spring, I must have it."

Mylo: CABBIT JUIIIICE

Some backstory: There are sources of magic in the world called springs that harbor the life energy of the earth. They are usually attached to a location or object, and only the people who are connected to the life force can sense it. Eflasia is a rare case where the spring is actually a living individual. Public knowledge-wise, little is known about springs besides what has already been mentioned because they are too powerful or unstable to observe.

Apparently, Mylo is the murderous stranger. It is the mages' guesses that he struck a deal with something evil, for he is able to carry plagues that do not affect him, but leave a trail of pestilence behind him. None of his sicknesses were infecting Fontis because the small amount of magic naturally emanating from Eflasia was cancelling them out. As Mylo comes to claim Eflasia and the mages fight to shield her and fend him off, Nyxis arrives. Mylo takes one look at Nyxis, cackles, "My work has already been done for me here," and takes off. None of the guards (including Nyxis) can find him, but Nyxis has a feeling he will not be back for a very long time.

Knowing that Eflasia is a spring now, Nyxis can tap into the cabbit's magic, the raw energy of the world, and draw almost unlimited energy for her lightning magic—perhaps it will come in useful later. Through later research (Mainly, seeking out and speaking with unfortunate outcasts who have experimented with springs or seen the consequences secondhand) Eflasia learns that she must avoid trying to tap into the spring magic herself. A mortal spring must die to release and harness her own power. It is not a normal death; afterwards, the mortal spring is still conscious, but not all there. Every subsequent use of the magic causes skin to peel from flesh, the mortal spring to lose the consciousness of an individual and join the consciousness of the world, or the mortal spring to simply go insane. If there are such things as souls, the mortal spring forfeits hers upon unlocking her energy, completely drops out of the normal cycle of life-and-death for all living things (Whether that be after-life, a not-afterlife, rebirth, no one really knows...), and wastes away until there is nothing left.

Conflict Beginnings Arc (Nyxis is 20)

Kate's Note: Some more backstory: Kingdom Helios, also known as the Kingdom of Fire or Kingdom of the Sun, was at one point the largest and wealthiest kingdom on the continent, supplying the vast majority of metal products. The forges were kept alive primarily through the use of the region's spring, which the royal family had managed to tap into, despite not truly understanding its power. (The spring was more or less just part of a mountain.) The strain on the resource began to slowly cause the flow of magic to increase. There were some signs, unknown diseases of the mind, birth defects, and areas of unprecedented growth, but they were largely ignored. Eventually, the greed for energy went too far and the spring was released entirely, with an effect similar to the detonation of a bomb. The more prosperous area of the kingdom was rendered uninhabitable, a forest of madness; just setting foot into it would cause hallucinations. The remaining citizens retreated to the lowlands. With the monarchy in shambles, the poorly treated lower class revolted, easily overthrowing the old government and executing most of the royal family.

Charlotte, a duchess of Helios, wasn't directly in the royal family, but she had always been ambitious and serious in her duties. The disaster horrified her and she wanted to help with the restoration, but when the hostilities escalated, she was forced to flee her home.

Duchess Charlotte and King Kade were childhood friends, so he offered her asylum in his own kingdom. She was reluctant to leave Helios, but with the choice between her kingdom or life, she had no other option.

Present-Time: With the explosion of the Helios Spring only a month or two ago and Charlotte left with almost nothing, Kade and Charlotte agree to marry. The marriage between the two is mutually understood as a marriage of convenience. Neither has feelings for the other beyond close friendship, and while the king is generally a good person, monogamy is not his thing.

The xenophobic people of Fontis have precarious first impressions of Charlotte at best. To ease them into accepting their new queen, Charlotte and Kade have a son. Unbeknownst to the public, baby Prince Albert is adopted. Eflasias (and consequently Nyxis) and a few others know this, but are under strict orders to keep quiet.

Nyxis's first impression is that Eflasias's step-mother Queen Charlotte seems really nice as an acquaintance. Charlotte tries her best to connect

with Eflasias; her relationship with her step-daughter starts out as that of an uncomfortable new wife who doesn't like kids but awkwardly tries to get along with them for the sake of her husband.

Unfortunately, Eflasias doesn't make efforts to get along with Charlotte at all. Charlotte began resenting Eflasias with the shift from Helios to Fontis becoming the world's leading nation, and now living in the same building as the princess, Eflasias's ambition is a constant reminder to Charlotte of herself and what she has lost.

Kate's Note: Really if Charlotte and Eflasias weren't so similar, they could have had a good relationship.

Author's Note: The royal rabbit families of Fontis and Helios have slightly differing appearances. Kade descends from a mix of rabbits and domestic cats. Charlotte descends from a mix of rabbits and lions. Thus, Kade and Eflasias both have rabbit-like ears and fluffy tails. Charlotte and Albert have equally-long-but-more-tapering ears (like lynxes) and lion-like tails. When Helios was more prosperous than Fontis, Helios citizens liked to lord that their royal ancestry was nobler too.

Charlotte quickly gets attached to Albert and considers him her true son. She slowly begins considering that Albert take the throne after Kade. Although the prince is not her bloodline, he's still the closest thing she's got to being hers. Unintentionally, perhaps even subconsciously, Charlotte sees Albert as a means to achieve her own ends. If he is able to become King, then he can do for Fontis what she could not do for her own kingdom.

Kate's Note: Like a pageant mom. She's actually pretty loving towards Albert, strict but not awful. Her conflict with Eflasias is in part bitterness but also in part spurred on by Eflasias who does not treat her well. Eflasias thinks that her father shouldn't have ever married since even though Charlotte is royalty, she has no actual power.

Gag scene: Nyxis happens upon Eflasias crying in one of the corners she likes to hide in and asks what is going on. (Being a small animal, Eflasias is happy squeezing into nooks and crannies like a chinchilla.) The princess shouldn't be sad, because there is an important dinner meet going on that night. Eflasias is in a lovely traditional middle-eastern dress and says she wanted to experiment with fashion. Queen Charlotte saw her and very loudly

exclaimed to one of the maids, "She looks like a whore, just like her mother."

[Nyxis lifts Eflasias chin up.]

Nyxis: No no no, Eflasias. You're beautiful!

[Eflasias snuffles and smiles.]

Nyxis: I'm leading guard duty tonight at the meet so everything will be fine, okay? Don't worry, I'm here.

It is time for the meet; some foreign ambassadors have arrived to discuss trading. Charlotte is shocked when they enter the dining room. Eflasias stifles a giggle; Nyxis and her knights have dressed in skimpy midriff-showing middle-eastern garb like the princess is wearing. One of the guards eyes nervously darts to Eflasias and Nyxis and back. Nyxis threatens him that they'll all be wearing nipple tassels next time if he doesn't behave.

Seeking Wisdom:

Eflasias prepares for the worst and travels outside of her kingdom for the first time to garner supporters for herself. Nyxis always comes along on her travels as a bodyguard.

A Summary of Important Kingdoms

*The term 'kingdom' is used synonymously with 'country' or 'nation.' Most of the kingdoms were monarchies sometime in the past, and the word has stuck to this day with the same denotation.

Fontis (Kingdom of Waterfalls)

A capitalist monarchy, Fontis is the greatest nation in the world; the poorest people in the kingdom are middle-class. Fontis attributes its success to keeping its division of wealth even amongst the citizens. Powered through history primarily by springs found in waterfalls, its flourishing state is now also partially attributed to Eflasias, a mortal spring herself. Population-wise, a variety of common forest and plains species can be found here.

Helios (Kingdom of Fire)

Perched in a mountainous region near active volcanos, Helios is powered by thermal energy. Once rivals in wealth with Fontis and the Kingdom of Sound, it is still a major political power with a population on par with them. However, the citizens' migration to the slums after the explosion of the kingdom's main spring has considerably weakened them. Canines make up the majority of the population, followed by other hardy animals such as boars and vultures.

Kingdom of Lights

Powered by springs of electromagnetic energy, this kingdom consists entirely of cities built into ravines that stretch from a hundred to five-hundred miles down a canyon. The cities are lit in neon all times of the day since sunlight never reaches most of the levels. There's no government, but a certain amount of order manages to be maintained through the wealthy corporations (It is a pretty corrupt system, and could be described as somewhere between anarchy and oligarchy.) The ambience is like Earth 2014's Las Vegas 24/7.

Barely anyone is a permanent resident, but some of the continent's wealthiest people maintain homes and businesses there. Most residents have tattoos marking their status that only light up under the city lights, differentiating them as different levels of citizens (Even indicating social or marital status), authority, or criminals. A variety of species inhabits the kingdom since many come and go.

Kingdom of Sound

Nyxis's parents are both from the Kingdom of Sound, and later emigrated to Fontis where Nyxis and Thorn were both born and raised. The Kingdom of Sound is a theocratic republic. It is distinguished by gothic architecture, with focus on the acoustics and intricate designs of the buildings. Many crystals and forests are scattered throughout the landscape. It is powered by its namesake, with music and related arts considered the highest form of culture. Nuns and monks blind themselves in order to raise their sense of sound and become closer to music. It is currently the second most prosperous and wealthy kingdom in the world, after Fontis. The

population is comprised mostly of elegant deep forest animals, such as deer and squirrels.

Kingdom of Ice

Powered by the nuclear energy of an extremely powerful spring, this snow-capped kingdom surrounds the crater of an extinct volcano, the source of the spring. Citizens live mostly in homes carved from the cave walls. The Kingdom was built far too close to the spring. As a result, the citizens have highly magical abilities but are also considered insane by the outside world. The best way to explain this is that they are akin to sociopaths: human life is not something they feel needs to be protected. (It is not that they cannot feel emotions; they are extremely attuned to others' emotional states. Rather, their ways of thinking do not equal out to that of a normal person's. To them, suffering is more severe than death. For example, if somebody is trapped under a rock and screaming in pain, instead of lifting the rock, an Ice Kingdom citizen will opt to bash in the trapped person's head. The trapped person would not be in pain anymore, and the trapped person would not have wanted to be alive but permanently maimed from that rock anyways.)

Ice Kingdom citizens gravitate strongly towards wild magic (Not the magic used in battles that has been filtered through a channeler, but the raw, intense power of spring magic.) Wild magic to them is like a drug, and they have an insatiable need for it. Due to feeling uncomfortable if they are not near a source of wild magic, they tend not to leave their kingdom. They usually have aloof stares and body language as if they are not quite all there, and speech-wise tend to ramble or go on unrelated tangents. Although uncommonly found outside their kingdom, if they are present in the outside world, they are usually kept as pets. Their magic is usually sealed in this case by fitting them with an un-removable (by themselves) enchanted collar.

Of Ice Kingdom citizens and outsiders who have had children, only three or four of the offspring in all of history have been in their right minds, but this number includes some of the most powerful wizards in the world (with only one existing at the present, Lyrus the Ram.) The Kingdom of Ice itself is generally a safe place to be as long as rules are followed; this is because criminals are happily devoured alive by the citizens, who can go years without sustenance due to the spring magic. (Food is hardly found in

this region, so corpses are considered a delicacy.) It is not advised to stay more than a month within the Kingdom of Ice, or visitors will start to go insane from the spring themselves. Population-wise, most are arctic animals.

The Lost Kingdom

Located in Earth 2014's Australia, it is named so because it is the last Kingdom to have joined the present world on a map in two centuries. Thus, the source of the spring(s) here is still a mystery. This kingdom harbors all sorts of fanciful furies, most notably marsupials, found nowhere else in the world.

Kingdom of Chemicals

The most technologically-advanced kingdom in the world, its spring is indeed chemical-powered. It looks like a science-fiction version of Earth 2014's Venice. Speedboats are the main transportation across pristine canals in place of streets. Ornate skyscrapers tower over the region. Covering a far larger area of land than Fontis, in terms of land-to-money ratio it claims to be wealthier too. Aquatic animals such as swans, frogs, sharks, and killer whales tend to thrive here.

Kingdom of Dolls

This kingdom is the largest artifact left from the Age of the Humans. Thick smog coats the clustered cities, and suffocating white ash rains in the region almost daily. Filled with abandoned skyscrapers, everything is spotlessly clean to the point where it is downright eerie. The ashes are swept from the streets as soon as they fall by the many high-technology androids here, the last remaining from extinct human civilization. A massive stretch of abandoned power stations that have long been rusting and overgrown with thorns and underbrush runs through the kingdom.

It seems that the androids were running on orders to maintain the cities, and the humans died so abruptly that no one had ordered them to stop.

The kingdom itself is not a great place to live as a malfunctioning gasmask means certain death. Stragglers show up every now and then.

Archaeologists and architects come quickly to gather human artifacts, remains, or blueprints of the ancient buildings to return to the outside world. The only permanent 'citizens' are the androids. They do various tasks besides keeping the city clean, including bringing out food every day, taking the untouched plates away to be disposed of, and bringing dead unfortunate explorers to a big pit of corpses since they ran out of burial space for previous dead unfortunate explorers.

Archaeologists must usually bring rare minerals or gemstones to trade with the androids for human curiosities; newer human goods can still be obtained since the androids still have a functioning manufacturing system that they were never given commands to halt.

The androids are extremely unsettling to the outside world because unlike the current Earth population, they lack muzzles and tails. Based on the similarities between recovered human skeletons and the androids, the commonly accepted theory is that humans built these robots in their likenesses.

The Kingdom of Dolls will soon be completely inaccessible. The underground spring that provides electrical energy is slowly dying out. Once it vanishes, the androids keeping the cities clean will run out of power, and those who try to enter will die from the kingdom's accumulated ashes before they can reach the buildings in the center of the region.

Various Forsaken Kingdoms

These were once grand kingdoms but are now only a shadow of their former glory. They are all slums, but still habitable. The most commonly accepted hypothesis for the Forsaken Kingdoms is that they cannot flourish because their springs ran out.

Our Final Days Arc (Nyxis is 21 years old at the start of this arc)

Scene 1: Two Heirs

Not long after the marriage, King Kade dies of natural causes.

<http://lyritwolf.deviantart.com/art/Our-Final-Days-433328203>

Kade's death was unexpected, so he had not set aside plans for Eflasia and Albert.

It is common knowledge that Eflasia is half-royalty, so Albert by law is the rightful heir to the throne. Until he is old enough to be crowned king, the kingdom goes under the rule of Queen Charlotte. Nyxis and the entire Fontis military are required by law to serve Eflasia's step-mother, the new sole monarch now.

The majority of Fontis citizens still want to see Eflasia crowned queen, believing she would be a good ruler since being half-commoner means that she would have good ties with them (And, they have been expecting her for a long time.) Discord starts to bubble under the surface of Fontis as the citizens begin arguing about who the future ruler should be. Ambitious Charlotte tries to dissuade the people from taking Eflasia's side by spreading rumors about Eflasia and Nyxis.

Townsperson 1: Eflasia is a half-blood. She has no right to be our next ruler!

Townsperson 2: Her bodyguard made a pact with the devil. Where else would she get such a strange sword from?

Townsperson 3: Perhaps the princess secretly had her father killed. She's had her eye on the throne for a very long time.

Townsperson 4: That's a possibility we can't rule out. Princess Eflasia and General Pierce do have long-standing ties with criminals and drug rings.

Townsperson 5: I knew those two were corrupt. Did you know the general sleeps around too? I got that straight from a castle maid's mouth!

Townsperson 6: How scandalous! I bet Pierce and Eflasia are having an affair too! (A relationship between the two would be akin to incest in Fontis)

citizens' eyes. Eflasia is encouraged to marry outside of Fontis to gain more land and wealth for the kingdom.)

Eflasia: Don't listen to Charlotte. She's a pheasant that thinks she's a peacock!

Eflasia cannot combat these rumors with the information that Prince Albert is adopted. Albino cabbits have always been rare and the species of royalty down both the Fontis and Helios line (Eflasia isn't even sure where Kade and Charlotte managed to get Albert from), so even if Albert's adoption was brought up, 1. Albert would still be the proper heir to the throne because he is visibly pure royal bloodline and 2. people would be inclined to believe that Eflasia is stirring up lies about Charlotte.

Kate's Note: A big factor in that too is that Eflasia is inexperienced. The majority of Fontis still dislikes Charlotte, but she is older and has a lot more knowledge on how to actually deal with worldly conflict and international negotiations whereas Eflasia has only had theory and has never made any big decisions before.

Scene 2: Finale

Two weeks after her father's death, Eflasia is still in a grieving dress. Nyxis hears Eflasia crying (a rarity) in her room, and knocks to see what's going on. There is no reply, but the door is unlocked. Nyxis goes in to see poor Eflasia buried under a pile of pillows so she can hide her crying.

Eflasia says that Charlotte wants to meet with her today, and Eflasia says she knows for sure that the queen means to tell her to step down from expecting to be Fontis's ruler. Nyxis tries to convince Eflasia that there's no way Charlotte would be approaching that topic, especially at a time like this, but Eflasia doesn't believe it and insists on pouting.

Nyxis brings up that maybe becoming queen really is more trouble than it's worth, and suggests that she and Eflasia step down or leave the kingdom to avoid the conflict.

Eflasia slaps Nyxis.

Eflasia: You're talking about running away? No! I'd rather die fighting for the crown than live my life in obscurity!

This the first time Eflasia has ever laid a hurtful hand on Nyxis. She can't do anything but hold the side of her cheek and stare at the princess in shock.

A servant peeks in and says it's time for the meeting. Nyxis has a bad feeling about the whole thing and pre-emptively calls in some of her guards to hide behind the pillars in the meeting room, just in case.

Charlotte had insisted that Eflasia come by herself, and looks very displeased as Nyxis arrives with the princess.

Charlotte has also brought some of her own personal bodyguards into the room, which makes Eflasia and Nyxis suspicious even though they look like they are on regular duty. Charlotte tells Eflasia that a lot has happened lately, and she feels like Eflasia should take a vacation to one of her other palace homes near Fontis for a while.

Eflasia bluntly says she's not going to do it, and the two get angrier at each other the more they are adamant on having their way. Eflasia snaps and starts attacking Charlotte (Biting, hitting, pulling fur and hair...) Charlotte points at Nyxis and tells her to uphold the law and escort this traitor of the kingdom that has laid violent hands on the queen out. Up to this point, Nyxis has grudgingly gone with everything Charlotte has asked her to do, for the sake of keeping peace.

Author's Note: I want to make it a big breath-holding moment when Charlotte orders Eflasia out, and have the reader know that Nyxis originally doesn't have her mind made up on whether to escort Eflasia out like she said was originally good for her, or go against Charlotte and start Oh-God-What-Have-I-Done.

Charlotte's guards hold up their weapons against Eflasia, but Nyxis (and her hiding soldiers that come out) outnumber them and drive them to Charlotte's airship. Eflasia says she'll kill Charlotte if she ever steps foot in Fontis again; Charlotte declares war on Eflasia to reclaim Fontis.

Charlotte, Albert, and the rest of Helios's presence are gone from Kade Castle now. Although Eflasia and Nyxis have temporarily regained Fontis, they are technically traitors to the kingdom by the decree of the current monarch.

Nyxis wonders if they've done the right thing.

War Arc (Nyxis is 21 years old at the start of this arc)

Scene 1: This is War

Charlotte's kingdom, save for her bodyguards and a small reserve that came with her and rejected the formation of the new republic, are firmly against her. However, she manipulates other kingdoms into joining forces with her against Fontis.

The people who formed the new government of Kingdom Helios were all originally lower class, and had been poorly treated by the monarchy when it was in power. Currently caught up in re-building, they would seek to avoid any sort of international conflict (and wouldn't want to fight alongside Charlotte anyways.) Thus, Queen Charlotte turns to winning the sympathy of neighboring kingdoms to help her on behalf of her 'unrightfully dethroned son.'

Charlotte: I'm your best bet if you want to see Fontis overthrown in your lifetime. You don't have to like me but you do NEED me.

Besides aiding a call to justice for Charlotte's baby, kingdoms that help her will receive a share of Fontis's grand wealth, including some rare materials for magic found nowhere else in the world. Her remaining supporters from Helios and two other kingdoms (Ice and Lost) agree to ally with Charlotte. And, she muses, with the gain of Fontis, the rest of Helios will be more than willing to join the flourishing lands under her rule—or easily be taken by force.

The peaceful Kingdom of Sound is really for the most part trying to stay out of all of this. Although it does not actively fight, it offers support in the form of supplies to Fontis in recognition of Nyxis having descended from the kingdom. The Kingdom of Chemicals remains neutral as well. The new Republic of Helios would not be able to do much at this point, but it does favor Eflasias more because her win would mean Charlotte's inability to take Helios back for the previous monarchy.

Scene 2: Pierce's Military

Gaius and Nyxis were both Lieutenant Generals before the war. Eflasias moves Nyxis up to General (of the military), a rank that is only available during wartime. She and Eflasias have decided that they will work as a team to defend Kingdom Fontis. Gaius, who has tried to be indifferent (although grudges Nyxis a little because he feels like she was being handed her ranks on a silver platter), accepts that for now he will have to let Nyxis take the lead; he recognizes that having Nyxis and Eflasias working in tandem might be the only way they can stand against Charlotte and the Kingdoms allying her. Fontis may be well off, but it is small for a kingdom. Charlotte's newly assimilated military is three times the size of Eflasias's military.

Kingdom Fontis's military has traditionally been composed of fifty-two divisions, each named after a card in the standard fifty-two playing card deck.

Author's Note: In reality, there are fifty-four divisions, including the **Joker Cards**. The Joker Cards have varied in history from being unconventional divisions such as pirates, snipers, or bards (that are actually snipers) to being highly-talented single individuals. They are sometimes present in the military and sometimes not, and only Eflasias and the War Council would know of their existence.

Each division has a different specialty: air force, amphibious, aquatic, stealth, husbandry (beast-handling), and so on. As a result, the divisions' sizes can vary greatly. The divisions themselves are all of equal rank. Thus, organization during wartime largely depends on the royal family: the king or queen usually chooses the military leaders (who may be of any rank and come from any of these divisions) to direct during wartime.

This time, Eflasias has called upon Nyxis to help her choose her War Council. The military leaders are as follows:

From the **Three of Hearts** (Stealth Division): Brigadier Sandy the Sabertooth Tiger. She is promoted from colonel for the war. Cunning even for her division, she is one of the upcoming younger soldiers that Nyxis has been observing.

From the **Ace of Diamonds** (Husbandry Division): Major General Samson Tailchaser the Labrador-Border Collie. Eflasias had her doubts about promoting him to Major General due to his happy-go-lucky behavior and apparent aloofness, but Nyxis insisted that his off-the-wall ideas will come in handy, and they seem to have had a lucky streak in every conflict he has been pulled into yet.

From the **Ten of Clubs** (Defence Division): Major General Ember the Golden-Scaled Pangolin. He has worked alongside Gaius for a long time.

From the **Ace of Spades** (Cavalry): Lieutenant General Gaius the Clydesdale. He would ordinarily have no opinion on whether the throne goes to Charlotte's son or Eflasias, but knowing Kade and watching his best friend's daughter grow up has moved him to side with Eflasias. He will loyally stick with her and hopes this is the best choice.

From the **Ace of Hearts** (Air Force): Lieutenant General Nyxis Pierce the Bat. Promoted from Lieutenant General for the sake of the war, she is prepared to give all of herself to see that Eflasias becomes Queen. After all, the most frightening warrior is the one with nothing to lose.

Scene 3: Charlotte's War Council

Charlotte has been presented with the best lieutenant generals and armies from their prospective kingdoms.

General Lock Dread the Wolf: A blond wolf from Helios, Charlotte has promoted him to general because they share a mutual cause and shar(ed; they're all dead now) mutual friends during the glory days of Helios. He is missing his left eye, but like Nyxis appears to be stronger for it. (Yes, he has dreadlocks.)

Lieutenant General Fossil the Crocodile: From the mysterious Lost Kingdom. He is brutal, wields exotic weaponry, and pretty much will turn anything he sees into a weapon, including live soldiers' limbs, live soldiers' tails, live soldiers... Do not approach.

Lieutenant General Cuckoo the Phoenix-Penguin: One of the more ambitious half-Ice Kingdom half-outsider born individuals, Cuckoo was convinced to join Charlotte in hopes of obtaining a great magic power that he could bring back to his people (or hoard for himself; we don't really know.) Although he was raised outside of the Ice Kingdom, being born half-Ice gives him the ability to connect with the kingdom's people just enough to

gather soldiers for the war. (Ice kingdom citizens don't have a basic concept of war. Cuckoo will use said soldiers to his advantage by locking them up in cages until battles, and then tossing them out in the midst of the chaos, where they will release insane amounts of wild magic to defend themselves with the mentality of cornered animals.) Also a trait biologically inherited from his Ice Kingdom side, he has no guilty conscience about killing.

Scene 4: War of the Cabbits (Various notable events)

First Battle

[Dread surveys a photo Charlotte has given him: It is Eflasias and Nyxis horsing around.]

Dread: Hmph. Let's take your kingdom back from these children.

Fontis's bridge to the continent has been sealed off. The rainy season has just started, and there are a couple inches of water separating Fontis and the mainland. Charlotte's forces led by General Dread march through the shallows, planning to take the kingdom before Nyxis and Eflasias can prepare for battle. They are met halfway by Nyxis and only two wide rows of pawn soldiers behind her with ordinary weapons, standing shoulder-to-shoulder and wearing *ridiculous* pastel rain boots. None of the other more experienced military leaders are with her. There are chuckles from Dread's troops. All of Nyxis's soldiers point their weapons to the ground (It appears incredibly stupid because they are leaving themselves quite open to attack.)

Nyxis: I'll only say this once. Turn back.

Dread gives the command to attack, but as soon as his forces move, they are shocked by the electric power Nyxis and her soldiers send coursing through their weapons into the shallow waters. Nyxis had gathered every lightning mage she could find and quickly donned the lowest-ranking foot-soldier uniforms on them. Nyxis's forces advance, increasing the voltage on their weapons and not giving Dread's soldiers a chance to do anything but retreat unless they want to be seized by Fontis. Nyxis succeeds in chasing the larger enemy out.

Charlotte and her War Council discuss the first unexpected loss. Dread, feeling like he has been defeated by a child, remains mostly silent here.

Fossil: They're creative.

Cuckoo: [Rotates his head almost 360 degrees] A dangerous quality. [His head stays in this position for a little while.]

[Fossil grabs Cuckoo's head. There is a cracking sound as he forces the phoenix-penguin's head in the wrong direction a little more. Cuckoo's head immediately swivels back to normal.]

Cuckoo: Thanks.

Creative Disagreements

Eflasias scolds Nyxis about a fight where the general ordered arrows to be shot down on enemies in a large smiley face formation. Fontis soldiers advanced using the smile walls as barriers (Nyxis wasn't very interested in that archery class in the training arc, but I guess it paid off...)

Eflasias: Okay Nyxis, there are so many things wrong with this. [Counts on her cabbit fingers] The archers have to spend a little more time aiming for non-lethal points. And poison-tipped arrows? You just *paralyzed* them? A *wall* of still-alive people being shot at. And smiley faces. [Counts it again on another finger] SMILEY FACES.

Nyxis: ...We won. [The majority of enemy forces being captured and thus able to provide vital information or be persuaded to side with Eflasias later pacified the princess enough to leave it at that.]

Sleeping Beauty

[Eflasias's War Council debates what to do about one of Kingdom Chemicals' dome-protected cities that Charlotte's forces have taken hostage and sealed to sway the kingdom into the fight. The vote is three to two (with Nyxis and Samson dissenting) to kill the citizens in the way to reclaim it.]

Gaius: [Irritated] We all must make sacrifices if we are going to put Fontis first, General.

Nyxis: The path to Hell is paved with good people. There has to be a better way!

Gaius: We must act fast. If you have any ideas, you had better get them out now.

[Nyxis's eyes dart around, Samson's snoring the only noise awkwardly filling the room]

Nyxis: Gather all the alchemists.

[**Conclusion:** Brigadier Sandy and as many of her stealth division, alchemists, and mages she can gather locate the air vents to the dome and pump it up with sleeping gas. Eflasia's forces lock pick all the openings afterwards when everybody inside (both citizens and Charlotte's forces) is fast asleep, and reclaim the city. The Kingdom of Chemicals owes them a favor now.]

Talking to Mylo

Mylo saves Nyxis from a fatal blow by General Cuckoo. Although wary of him because it is clear now he's from the Kingdom of Ice (and because he once tried to possess Eflasia), she questions why he did it.

Mylo simply says, "Karma is bullshit. Bad things happen to good people," and leaves.

Assassins I

There are several kingdoms Charlotte can reside in during the war, but Eflasia and Nyxis must stay in Fontis to hold the fort. Thus, it is easier for assassins to locate Eflasia and Nyxis.

With the billow of midnight curtains, two assassins have quietly picked a window lock and made their way into Nyxis's bedroom. There is Nyxis, lying completely still with her eye open. The assassins freeze as her eyeball darts to them, and then rush out the window as quickly as they had come in. [Nyxis happens to sleep with her eye half open, and it's saved her this time.]

Assassins II

With Charlotte and Eflasia both being ambitious leaders, the struggle for Fontis has gone on for longer than expected. More damage has been done in a long time than seen from several wars combined, and there is still no end in sight. It is disheartening even though the war started only two years ago. Eflasia proposes a little party to cheer everybody up.

Eflasias, her council, and several other soldiers are sitting at the dining table enjoying themselves. The mood is lighter than it has been in a long time. Suddenly, everybody at the table keels over, unable to move.

The assassination squad, from the description given by the two members in Nyxis's bedroom earlier, had decided that the bedrooms must have been extensively booby-trapped. However, an impromptu get-together like this tonight, too small and short to think about heavily securing and with everybody important in one room, was too good to pass up. The wine was spiked with a rare, almost undetectable poison only found in Kingdom Helios.

The assassins congratulate each other, joking about how they will even have a party afterwards in the brightly decorated room. One of the assassins that failed to kill Nyxis earlier goes to reclaim her pride by taking the bat general out first. Moments from slitting Nyxis's throat, the assassin is stabbed in the stomach. Nyxis's sword is missing from her hilt, and instead in her talon. Her foot had made the sneak attack from under the chair and tablecloth.

Nyxis swipes the tablecloth off and throws it at the assassins on the other side of the table, trapping them in it as they run at her. This buys her time to immobilize the assassins near her with a well-placed shock to the neck, and soon all of the assassins are as un-moving as the guests at the table. Nyxis rummages through the assassins' belongings on them, finds antidotes, and soon all of her team is up and has apprehended Charlotte's squad. Nyxis has to pull a rather angry Eflasias away from kicking one assassin on the ground. (The whole time, Eflasias is squealing indignantly about how he's ruined her painstakingly-planned celebration.)

Eflasias: [Another kick] This one's for the cake you bit into! That was *my* cake! I put my blood, sweat, and tears into yelling at the baker to get it just right!

Once the enemy has been taken away, Gaius and Ember ask how Nyxis had been immune to the poison, despite having drunk as much as they had. Nyxis laughs and pulls out an almost empty cherry soda bottle from under the table. It's just been a well-kept secret that she doesn't drink. The flavor does not appeal to her, and flying, a favorite method of travel, just does not work well with inebriation. Several of the soldiers (and Gaius) argue with Nyxis about the taste and important culture of alcohol.

A new (thoroughly tested) wine bowl is brought out. A servant offers a glass to Nyxis. She sips on it, spits it out, and offers the rest to Gaius.

Battle between Kingdom Lost and Kingdom Fontis

Enemy Soldier: Quick! Aim for her blindside!

[Nyxis gores the soldier and his friend]

Nyxis: *What* blindside?

Nyxis has fallen to General Fossil, who is holding a large, jagged scimitar at her throat and a whip in his other hand. All fighting on the battlefield halts as soldiers on both sides stop to watch. Fossil chuckles that if she begs, he will not make her death painful.

Nyxis notices that her crystal sword has gathered a large amount of light on Fossil's armor. She deflects a rainbow from her sword, blinding him and giving her enough time to swing his head off.

The battle is wrapped up pretty quickly with a win for Fontis after that.

Charlotte: ...She killed him with a RAINBOW.

A Witness Soldier: T-technically Your Majesty, it was decapitation.

[Charlotte glares at the soldier. His fur stands on end from head to tail, and he awkwardly excuses himself and shrinks away.]

Poet

[Charlotte's remaining War Council is looking at a grid map on a table. Toy figures, the current locations of the forces, are placed upon the squares of cities and regions.]

Cuckoo: You are but a rat /

You belong inside a cage /

Or inside a cat.

[Cuckoo swipes all of the figures off the map.]

Shenanigans (Inspired by the Empty Fort Strategy of Zhuge Liang)

Nyxis and fifty soldiers are on their way to the Chemical Kingdom to pick up vital magical items for the mages. They decide that it is best to

secretly transport the volatile items via foot. Charlotte is tipped to this. General Dread gathers five thousand soldiers and approaches the large midway village Nyxis is at on the way back. Nyxis asks for the village gates to be flung open wide, tells her forces and the villagers to hide, strips down, and plays a harp in front of the gates.

Lieutenant: Sir, this is **far** too bizarre to not be a trap.

Dread: Quiet lieutenant.

Lieutenant: Do we really want to go back to Charlotte and tell her we got the smackdown from a...a naked woman with a harp?

Dread: ...Retreat men

Scene 5: Compromises.

Most of the soldiers on the battlefield now are wary of and even avoid Nyxis. The rumor is if you can see your own reflection in her crystal eyepatch, it is the last thing you will ever see.

It seems the war is also taking its toll on Nyxis. At one point we see an unconscious Nyxis, slung over Samson's shoulder, escorted by a few soldiers and being carried off the battlefield.

As the situation gets graver and Charlotte does not back down, Nyxis resorts to abandoning her pacifist philosophies to win. This is when she begins employing brutal strategies (like this one, inspired by a true event of Earth 2014's deceased Princess Olga of Kiev):

Illustration by Mr-Tiaa on Deviantart: <http://mr-tiaa.deviantart.com/art/CM-Lyritwolf-383973233>

Charlotte has claimed a significant, heavily-fortified capital city. When a full-out assault is ineffective, Nyxis offers a gesture of peace. Fontis will leave the city alone if each household gives her a pair of doves. The birds are gladly delivered. That night while the city sleeps, Nyxis has her soldiers attach hot coals to the birds' feet with strings and sends them flying home. Fontis then seizes the completely burning city, and everyone who does not bow to Eflasia is put to death on the spot.

Death tolls for Charlotte's forces and citizens caught in the battles sharply rise. Nyxis's forces leave corpse-paved streets, waterways flooded with the blood of fighters and families in their wake.

It breaks Nyxis's heart to slaughter so many. She is alarmed that this method appears to be more effective. Would Fontis have won earlier if she had been focused on annihilation instead of invoking surrenders at the start? Would fewer people have died? Their faces tear at her conscience and haunt her nightmares. If she had sided with Charlotte, if she had talked some sense into Eflasia, if only they hadn't run headfirst, young and stupid, into a war in the first place, blinded by delusions of grandeur...

If, if, if only, if.

No.

She mustn't despair.

She must keep going.

The end will justify the means, and she will regret her choices for the rest of her life only if these sacrifices are in vain.

If this is what must be done to see Eflasia become queen and Fontis a greater kingdom under her rule, then so be it.

Scene 6: Time.

Nyxis has been getting more and more weary. Eflasia suspects this is not just from the war. One day, the bat comes into the throne room in a cloak. She looks like she is shivering under it. She tells Eflasia not to worry about her, that she has some important business to take care of, and should she not return in a long time, to have Sandy take her place. Eflasia is baffled, scolding Nyxis that this is the last time and place that she needs to be abandoned. Nyxis tells Eflasia that she is doing the best she can, kisses her cheek, and bids her goodbye.

Eflasia is dumbfounded for a moment, puzzling over Nyxis's strange behavior. She has a feeling that nobody knows about this turn of plans. How irresponsible of Nyxis! Nothing could be so important that it rips Nyxis away

from her wartime duties and Fontis hanging in the balance. Eflasia decides to investigate what is going on.

The princess bursts into Nyxis's room. It looks like a room that she tried to keep clean but simply could not with so many possessions. Most are souvenirs of Nyxis's travels, many of which Eflasia recognizes. Globes, ships in bottles, seashell hangings, lanterns, a stuffed unicorn toy from their childhood... There are several portraits of herself too, a cloth covering one frame that appears to include artistic nudity.

Nyxis is nowhere to be found. Eflasia inspects Nyxis's dresser. In one drawer there is a curious array of feathers, either short and red, or long and grey with white tips. A few of these have been fashioned into barrettes that Nyxis rarely wore...

There is something more alarming in the next drawer. Eflasia finds many rose petals fallen from the bat's sword, and a terrifying collection of empty containers that used to hold crystal growth pills and painkillers.

There is a sickening smell of metal here. Tucked in the corner behind the dresser is a trash can filled with bloodied tissues.

Nyxis said she was going somewhere? Eflasia hurries to the castle airship dock and finds that the propellers on Nyxis's airship are quickly turning to full speed. She quickly stows away before Nyxis takes off.

Blindside Finale (Nyxis is 24.)

Into the sky and far over Fontis, Eflasias hears terrible wails and horrific scraping against the sides of the airship. Outside are all forms of ghoulish monsters, reflections of skulls and decay. The presence around the ship is uncanny and chilling, the sounds wordless but like the begging screams of those being tortured to death, the barrage of tearing against wood like splintered fingers against the cover of an accidentally sealed coffin. (The guardians of the floating islands appear to have changed with Nyxis's developing fears since her last visit...) The airship is barely holding up. Eflasias decides to remain as still as possible.

The guardians do not follow Nyxis into the portal.

She lands the airship on a floating island, the Edge of the World. Fate the dragon is here, patiently waiting for her as if he has not moved for the past twelve years.

Nyxis had felt that living out a full life was too good to be true, and she was right. With the injuries in her line of work taken into account, Fate had originally intended for Nyxis to live three and a half years. Her amount of time on earth had been doubled "*because you are a very intriguing individual. We were interested in seeing what you would do with this superfluous time.*" Nyxis despairs. She had been left living this long simply to be observed, an experiment this whole time.

She is hurting. Her once-dashing uniform is tattered and stained with blood, a startling contrast of prestige and pain. The crystals are jagged, breaking out of her skin, growing the most in places she has recently been wounded. They have been spreading inside her and will take her today. She is using her electric magic to block out most of her pain receptors. Coughing out another stream of blood, she shoves the remainder of the pills stashed in a pocket into her mouth, for what help they might be.

She limps. Her movements are unnatural, robotic and zombie-like, for she is also running on electric magic to move her muscles and tendons that are quickly being replaced by crystals. They are no longer able to absorb nutrients properly. She knows (and Fate knows) that if she had not picked up lightning magic, she would be crippled and bedridden now.

Fate continues speaking. His words are familiar. She has heard them before. But this time, with his voice, images appear before her eyes of so many ways she could have passed away today, crystallizing on the spot. Alone, curled up in her room, afraid and hopeless. On her favorite cliff above Fontis, watching the most beautiful sunset. Everybody waiting around her bed. One more embrace with Eflasias...

Fate: *You could have chosen to die in your home. Amongst your friends. Family. But you sought out this place, Today, instead. And not for the prestige of walking side-by-side with Death into the After. What hubris.*

But, this time, he does not have her hourglass. Rather, she does. It is her sword, and only now does she notice that there have been cracks in it, coming from the inside out, and another petal falls. There is only one more petal left, clinging to life on the symbol of her soul...

Nyxias: Is that really all my life is worth?

[Fate says no more. Instead, he parrots everything she says now, his voice a reflection of hers, almost mocking.]

Nyxias: It didn't have to end this way.

All those people slaughtered because of my ignorance.

Why didn't you kill me when I was supposed to die?

Answer me, You Monster!

Nyxias runs at Fate, and she doesn't stop. Every injury she receives from the dragon is another handicap, and even more crystals grow out of the fresh wounds.

But she falters. Slowly, and this time she dies. It would be a mercy killing if Fate had emotions. He lifts her up and snaps her backbone in half.

Eflasias, still in the airship, saw it all. She rushes out and tries to wake Nyxias up.

STOP.

Flip a coin. If it lands on heads, go to **DESTINY A**. If it lands on tails, go to **DESTINY B**.

DESTINY A: Believing Is Not Enough.

Eflasias kneels over Nyxis, shaking her limp body. She completely disregards Fate, who is watching.

Eflasias backhands Nyxis. "How *DARE* you fall?! You're my best knight. You're a disgrace to Fontis, and to me!" Her tone is demanding and selfish because that's the only way of thinking she has ever known. She cares a lot for Nyxis, but even now is unable to express that properly.

"Your weakness is unacceptable. Get back up and crush him, Nyxis. That's an order." Nyxis has always been there for her, unwavering, invincible. Tears fill Eflasias's eyes as she tries to convince herself that Nyxis is okay.

"...You said you would protect me. You *promised*."

She remembers the life they had together. She remembers the fairy tales, how she was going to be Queen and Nyxis was going to be her knight and they were going to be happy.

Until the war, life was like a fairy tale... Could it still be one too, if she believed hard enough?

Eflasias, still sobbing, leans in and kisses Nyxis...

Nothing happens.

The last petal falls from her sword.

Nyxis, or rather Nyxis's soul, watches Eflasias cry over her dead body. Death and another individual are standing with Fate now. The stranger is a blue wolf with wings like an aurora; she introduces herself as Lyrith. She is the guardian that whittles hourglasses out of the crystals in this dimension for new lives.

Lyrith says she was sent (by whom, she cannot divulge) to tell Nyxis that because the bat was such an extraordinary individual, she has been granted one wish.

Nyxis: I know what I want already. I wish there were no more suffering in the world.

Lyrit: Are you sure? This decision would rewrite the entire world as you know it into a completely different place, possibly one where you and Eflasias don't exist.

Nyxis: I see. Instead then, I want to wish for...

STOP.

If you choose to make a wish **for Eflasias**, go to **ENDING A**.

If you choose to make a wish **for the World**, go to **ENDING B**.

ENDING A

Nyxis: I want to make my wish for Eflasias. I want her to be happy.

Fate: *The choices of a rare few change the Master Plan. You are not one of these individuals, but she is.*

After making her wish, Nyxis walks side-by-side with Death into the afterlife.

The floating islands begin to crumble, and Fate tells Eflasias that she should leave before this place disappears. Eflasias drags Nyxis's crystal-scarred, lifeless body back to the airship. The islands crack in half as Eflasias shuts the door, and the ship falls into the abyss of space with it.

Eflasias wakes up to find that she is inside the airship, safe in the castle dock again.

Nyxis remains dead in her arms.

Nyxis is placed in a glass coffin in the garden. Samson refuses to leave her side, believing that she is asleep and will wake up one day. (He eventually dies waiting for her to awaken.) Eflasias cries as she leaves roses for her friend, banging on the glass and gripping the stems so tightly that her hands bleed from the thorns. She promises that she will go on to become queen as they had planned together.

Without Nyxis, Charlotte's forces are able to break through the outer walls of Fontis and begin destroying the outlying cities. With the odds against her, Eflasias resorts to unlocking her spring energy. With the power of Nyxis's wish, she finds that she is able to harness it without dying, and uses it to help her win the war against her step-mother.

As a successful queen of Fontis, Eflasias unites several lands and turns Fontis into the greatest nation in the world. Prince Albert grows up not really interested in taking the throne and keeps good ties with his big sister. Charlotte grudgingly but slowly accepts his decision.

As Eflasias ages, she misses Nyxis dearly even though she feels that her friend has been with her all this time.

This story ends, many years later, with Queen Eflasias laying flowers upon Nyxis's grave.

~THE END: Without Me.~

ENDING B

Nyxis: I still want to make my wish for the World. But, you know, without rewriting it. I want as few people as possible to suffer like I did.

Lyrit thinks about this, and they settle on how it can be done. Nyxis's sword gets broken and woven into the hourglasses of others who will also have difficult lives.

Author's Note: Amongst these hourglasses are those engraved with the names "Tazzle," "Wing," and "Beatrix"...

After making her wish, Nyxis walks side-by-side with Death into the afterlife.

The floating islands begin to crumble, and Fate tells Eflasia that she should leave before this place disappears. Eflasia drags Nyxis's crystal-scarred, lifeless body back to the airship. The islands crack in half as Eflasia shuts the door, and the ship falls into the abyss of space with it.

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Without Nyxis, Charlotte's forces are able to break through the outer walls of Fontis and begin destroying the outlying cities.

Samson is captured by Charlotte, and tortured to death by her War Council for information he does not know.

With the odds against her, Eflasia resorts to unlocking her spring energy. She dies in the process, and with the wild magic powering her, she goes mad. Her skin peels and burns as she uses it. Not quite mortal

anymore, she now has the mindset that ridding Fontis of all enemy-populated areas will mean that it is safe again.

Eflasias declares herself Queen. She locks down all of the cities occupied by Charlotte's forces in Kingdom Fontis and starts eating everybody in them.

Jaspar, knowing all the alleyways and hidden passages of Fontis, safely leads Nyxis's family out of the Kingdom.

Eflasias eventually captures and kills her step-mother. She throws her three-year-old step-brother over the castle wall. After all, a prince cannot return for vengeance if he never grows up.

All of the neighboring kingdoms find out about the atrocities that Eflasias is committing. They join forces, all march in, and burn Kingdom Fontis to the ground.

Centuries later.

A white fox, one wing tucked neatly behind her left shoulder, has stopped in her tracks. She is looking at an aged tombstone. A stone bird with one wing is perched upon it. It's the tombstone of that general, the same one with the unusual statue in town square of herself atop a warhorse and crushing enemy soldiers underneath. The fox recalls the history of Kingdom Coeurs...

Kingdom Coeurs is the greatest nation in the world. It was built over the ashes of Kingdom Fontis. Its founding fathers, all from different kingdoms, put justice before their differences to slay an evil queen and the cruel general who helped bring her into power.

The general mercilessly slaughtered all who opposed the queen. Cities were rend overnight into mountains of corpses; thousands and thousands died at her sword.

The queen locked up all of Kingdom Fontis and cannibalized her own people. Her castle's fountains overflowed with the blood of the sacrifices brought to appease her voracious hunger for sentient flesh.

When the other nations united and set Fontis ablaze, the queen and general perished in the fire with their kingdom. And then, the whole world moved on...

"Wing! Ya comin'? We `ere waitin' for ya." The voice of a rather irritated pirate otter snaps Wing out of her thoughts.

"Yeah!" Wing yells back. The fox's expression had clouded into a frown just thinking about Queen Eflasias and General Pierce. Those wicked people got what they deserved, she thinks, before catching up to Jezza and the others.

It's a bright sunny day, perfect for a vacation in Kingdom Coeurs, the Island Kingdom of Fairy Tales. Wing and her fellow adventurers disappear among the bustling city crowd.

~THE END: Self-Fulfilling Prophecy.~

DESTINY B: A Miracle.

Eflasias kneels over Nyxis, shaking her limp body. She completely disregards Fate, who is watching.

Eflasias backhands Nyxis. "How *DARE* you fall?! You're my best knight. You're a disgrace to Fontis, and to me!" Her tone is demanding and selfish because that's the only way of thinking she has ever known. She cares a lot for Nyxis, but even now is unable to express that properly.

"Your weakness is unacceptable. Get back up and crush him, Nyxis. That's an order." Nyxis has always been there for her, unwavering, invincible. Tears fill Eflasias's eyes as she tries to convince herself that Nyxis is okay.

"...You said you would protect me. You *promised*."

She remembers the life they had together. She remembers the fairy tales, how she was going to be Queen and Nyxis was going to be her knight and they were going to be happy.

Until the war, life was like a fairy tale... Could it still be one too, if she believed hard enough?

Eflasias, still sobbing, leans in and kisses Nyxis...

With a healing glow and cracking sounds, the crystals on Nyxis begin to break away, leaving scars behind.

STOP AGAIN.

Flip a coin. If it lands on heads, go to **ENDING C**. If it lands on tails, go to **ENDING D**.

ENDING C

Nyxis coughs and opens her eyes.

Fate: There is a force greater at work than me here.

Fate withdraws. The floating islands start to crumble. Nyxis scoops Eflasia up and runs back to the airship. As the island splits in half, the ship falls with it.

Eflasia awakens to find that she is inside the airship, safe in the castle dock again. Nyxis appears to be unconscious at her feet. Eflasia slaps her awake. There is much crying and hugging.

Eflasia wins the war. Queen Charlotte and Prince Albert are allowed to live (Probably more from the suggestion of Nyxis than Eflasia.) Albert grows up not really interested in taking the throne.

Samson decides that the military and fighting is not what he wants in life. He packs up and moves out of Fontis to travel the world, but does return to visit from time to time.

Eflasia ends up becoming a wonderful queen, peacefully bringing other lands together to make Fontis the greatest nation in the world.

And she and Nyxis and Albert and Charlotte and everybody

All live happily ever after.

~THE END: Our Fairy Tale.~

ENDING D

Nyxis coughs and opens her eyes

Just to see Eflasias die.

The princess would not sacrifice herself for anything but her kingdom. From that last look of surprise in her eyes, Eflasias must have not realized that she had to give up her own life to bring her friend back.

Nyxis begins to argue, but Fate says what is done cannot be reversed. Eflasias was one of the few who could change the Master Plan, and thus she was also one of the few with the ability to exchange her fate.

The floating islands begin to crumble, and Fate tells Nyxis that she should leave before this place disappears. Nyxis scoops a lifeless Eflasias up and runs back to the airship. The islands crack in half as Nyxis shuts the door, and the ship falls into the abyss of space with it.

Nyxis wakes up to find that she is inside the airship, safe in the castle dock again.

Eflasias remains dead in her arms.

Nyxis carries Eflasias's body to Charlotte. With no Eflasias left to protect, the bat swears herself to Eflasias's remaining next-of-kin. Queen Charlotte could lock Nyxis away or execute her, but decides that Nyxis is an asset and keeps her as a general. Nyxis talks to Eflasias's War Council, and they decide that giving Fontis to Charlotte and Albert is the best option. It is a peaceful transfer. Samson resigns from being a knight, but still acts as a consult for the husbandry division.

Three Years Later.

Fontis's large throne room looks more like a playpen than a formal room for the royal family. Gilded chairs are toppled all over the place with pillow forts made of expensive drapery. Toys from all four corners of the world fill up all four corners of the vast hall and more. A bat with scars all over stands guard.

The young six-year-old prince grows tired of his train set. He looks over to Nyxis. It may be strange that his best friend is a much older tutor, advisor, and bodyguard, but that thought has never crossed his mind. In fact, he shares all his secrets with her, and they play pranks on the servants together. He wants to still act like a kid just like her when he grows up. She does not seem to smile often without him, but she seems sadder than usual today. He knows how he can cheer her up.

She always seems happy when she talks about this wonderful person he wished he could meet.

Albert: Nyxis, please tell me more about big sister.

~THE END: Without You.~
